

Top Tips: Your Developing Baby's First Year

The transformation you will see in your baby from a newborn into a confident, communicating and social 12 month old child is amazing! Physically in this first year you will see your baby mature from a tiny being with very little control of his/her head making lots of random leg kicking and arm flailing movements, to a mobile traveller who is crawling with speed and agility, can stand and may even be able to walk a few steps alone. Sitting up is easy and offers exciting possibilities to observe the world and engage with it. Your baby is learning from the very start. Exploring and playing are important ways for this to happen. Early learning uses all the senses and by 12 months you can see increases in memory, concentration and a focussed approach to learning. Many language milestones are achieved by the end of this first year. Your baby is communicating all the time, soaking up new words at a tremendous rate. The first word is spoken! The one year old is a social baby who enjoys interacting with you. Sometimes slight dips in self confidence with new people may need extra reassurances from you. H/she likes meeting other babies too and finds them fascinating. Your baby will achieve a huge number of important milestones during this first year but it is important to remember that all children do so at their own pace. The milestones below will give you an idea of what progress you can expect but please do not worry if your baby takes a little longer or indeed achieves some of these earlier than indicated. As a parent you have a very important part to play in supporting this development within a loving and caring relationship. The ideas below will help you to support your baby's development.

Tip 1. Encourage your baby's walking

Many babies will walk if you hold their hands to support them, although few are as yet at the stage of walking alone. Do not be alarmed if your baby seems unready for this just yet. When the time is right it will happen. Provide opportunities and encourage your baby. Push-along toys are useful aids and help with standing and walking. Be mindful of safety. Make sure that floors are not slippery and anything that might be a hazard is put well away. Be there. Be vigilant.

Tip 2. Take advantage of better hand-eye coordination

From 9 months onwards you will see great improvements in your baby's hand-eye co-ordination. Grip is now appropriate to the task and the use of the pincer grip between forefinger and thumb is commonplace. Help to make this even better. Provide boxes with lids for baby to take off and put on, pieces of food to pick up with fingers. Encourage your baby to turn the pages of a book when you are sharing books together.

Tip 3. See dropping of objects as learning

Your baby loves to drop objects and toys. At this stage h/she does this because she can control this voluntarily. Your baby is delighted to see an object fall and you pick it up only to repeat the action again and again. This is real learning. Baby is learning about cause and effect. If I do this, then this happens. Such learning includes learning about weight, estimating distances and about gravity.

Tip 4. Support increased concentration and patience

You will see this a lot when your baby is playing. When stacking blocks or beakers to build towers, you will notice that your baby wants to finish the job in hand. H/she spends considerable time at this and is delighted when it is completed. Encourage this.

Tip 5. Use pointing and turn taking to help pre-speaking

Your baby is keen to point to things nearby. Vision has improved and hand-eye co-ordination with it. Your baby can track objects that move now. Use these opportunities to add language, "Yes, that is your train, isn't it". When you are speaking, give instructions. "Please pass me your spoon". You can expect baby to follow this instruction and they will be delighted if you reward them by telling them how clever they are when this is done. In conversation, pause after you have spoken to give time for your baby to respond.

Tip 6. Expect a first word

True! Towards the end of the first year, many babies will say their very first word. It may be "da-da" (and not "ma-ma" as the 'd' sound is easier for babies to pronounce). Girls tend to speak earlier than boys on average. Babbling still continues but you may notice the noises are now more meaningful. To help this you should be talking to your baby constantly so that h/she hears spoken language as much as possible.

Tip 7. Extend language skills

Do not put pressure on the baby, as they have their own individual time clock. Instead help this process. What you say provides a model for the child to copy and builds vocabulary. Use short simple sentences. Extend their babbling with complete sentences like, "Yes, this is your bread. It is a very nice piece of bread". Vary voice tone.

Tip 8. Start with (mark-making) scribbles

Some babies are interested in making marks from this age. Let them have a go with some coloured chalks and make marks on a small board or on a large piece of paper. H/she will love scribbling and making random swirling patterns. Encourage these early and important efforts with lots of praise. This is the beginning of writing.

Tip 9. Reassure in social situations

Self confidence drops a little towards the end of the first year. Your baby may appear clingy and constantly seeking assurance from you in new situations. Provide this. Be relaxed with your baby and especially when with other people. Give praise, hugs. Let your baby know h/she is safe and secure and that being with others is a good thing.

Tip 10. Be a good role model

One way that babies learn is by copying. Let your baby see you doing everyday tasks – preparing food, getting dressed, washing. H/she will want to copy these actions. When you are playing, she will wish to copy what you do too. Model good behaviour making it clear what is expected. Your baby is learning those important social skills and this takes time.

Moving	Communicating	Learning	Being with others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sits up without assistance ▪ Crawls with confidence and speed ▪ Can pull up to a standing position ▪ Stands for a short time without support ▪ Drinks from a cup with a little help ▪ Can stack beakers; puts objects in and out of a container; builds with blocks ▪ 'Walks' while holding onto furniture or with one hand held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Listens well to speech. Responds to basic instructions ▪ Points a lot to communicate. Raises arms to be picked up ▪ Responds to the word "no" ▪ Is able to enjoy stories as well as picture books ▪ More purposeful babbling ▪ Says first word (usually "da-da") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explores objects with interest. Is able to detect differences in shape, colours and textures of these ▪ Uses objects in the correct way, e.g. a mug to drink with, a telephone ▪ Grips with a pincer grip – finger and thumb. Begins mark-making. ▪ Drops objects voluntarily and is learning about cause and effect. ▪ Increased concentration to 1 minute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shows mood swings: excited to unhappy quickly ▪ Shows determination but also frustration ▪ Tests how parents respond to behaviour ▪ Shows close attachment to a parent or carer ▪ May be shy or anxious with strangers ▪ Enjoys company of others. Intrigued by other babies ▪ Copies other in play